

## Robert Gibbons

### MADE IN ABERDEEN

We're joining a number of others in this country gravitating back toward more frugal Times. As a student I'd frequent Goodwill & Salvation Army stores, & still be considered well dressed in the working-class institution I attended. This weekend she & I sifted through racks of clothes at one of those stores down the street. It didn't seem like the old days at all, what with all the polyester & chintz. Although we left empty-handed, our Time didn't go for naught. There was one lone overcoat there I was truly enamored of, heavy, Time-worn, it reminded me of Gogol first, but upon further inspection the inside gold label sewn onto the silk lining revealed why the damned thing felt so good, a heavy load in hand: MADE IN ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND. Tailored for a smaller-built man of previous generations, I still tried it on. Waiting for her to return from the dressing room, I asked her opinion, knowing she'd say it was too small. But it weighed a ton, & all I could think of was Bobby Burns heading up for his Highland Tour to Aberdeen in 1787, then heading all the way down to Newcastle, where I heard from Marilyn just a few days ago. It wouldn't make sense to spend twenty bucks for it, then have it cleaned, for it was wrinkled to Hell, as if in the bottom bin of one of those donation receptacles for years, only to hang it up somewhere as an *objet d'art* for inspiration, would it? The weather here today we could call Scottish, not necessarily a negative appellation, but rainy & cold & melancholy. We left it hanging there on the rack, but memory of its former heft has already turned my imagination to Odysseus claiming he's "No Man," escaping the one good eye of the Cyclops, not under the belly of a sheep, but a fine wool coat from Aberdeen.

INTIMACY & DISTANCE

As much as I want to write about there, I'm here. Cold down here in the breaking light. Cold up there in the attic room, where she's practicing her discipline. Intimate body as instrument making its sinewy, balanced, breath-filled way down here as warmth having something to do with longing & desire spiraling into music. There, over a vast ocean & two continents is where & what I first wanted to address: the otherworldly coincidence of hearing from someone in Croatia on the same day the *Mare Adriacum* anchored here in Portland transporting me in Time & Space. So there, & here, I have it, both Worlds: intimacy & distance funneling into One.

## PLEASURE

Waves rolled in as if it were winter, the sea erasing East End Beach completely, while across the way the stunning red *Kuban* basked, as if it were the Caribbean. One of the new guys at Harbor Fish Market said it was warmer inside than out, for a change. Saw an old man, older than I am, buying whole mackerel, which he planned to fillet himself & place under the broiler for breakfast. Mr. Anderson said he was born in “T Harbor,” which translates into Tenants Harbor, a place I used to stay when we lived in Massachusetts. Mussels farmed there now are well known across the country. Not only did this gentleman get our favorite fish (he & I already agreed upon it) his wife picked out some cusk, so I thought for sure he was Irish. Swedish, he said with a wink & glow & grin of pride. He remembered as a kid catching his own mackerel, pollock, & flounder, adding that his father kept eels in cage or creel in the mud, where he’d go down & grab a handful whenever he wanted, motioning the way his father would bend & scoop with what must have been a big hand. Told him my father boiled the cusk & we dipped it in butter, & that a friend retreating in Sweden lived near Copenhagen, & that I couldn’t wait to tell a Sørensen about meeting an Anderson, so his glow returned, saying his mother was from Denmark, & that he grew up speaking three languages, including both Swedish & Danish. We shook hands. He commented that it was good meeting me. Having already turned to walk away toward my own batch of whole fish, when I heard him say that, I added the lone word, “Pleasure.” I didn’t know then that later, when the belly of the mackerel entered my system by way of mouth, tongue, bloodstream, & brain, it would dredge up memories of grilled sardines at the bistro under the Carlton Hotel sign in Cannes, or the red pike painted across the back of one of the horses at the prehistoric cave of Pech Merle.

## TIME IN THE FUTURE

Suffering was palpable on the way up Preble Street before the soup kitchen opened, & without any evidence of pride seen anywhere, unless on the face of the guy with the Mohawk & his worn-down female companion in leather proud to be with someone at all, while his was that of a warrior, totally outmoded & almost useless on the street. Wanted to pass there again on the way back across town, where once the sea is in view everything changes. Remnants of last night's dusk seemed floating on the stage of horizon. Both tankers, the *Mare Tireneum* & the *Northern Dawn* lent their names to the potential idyll of the day. Just before or after the wild apple tree, depending on the walk back or forth, there's a granite stone now slowly revealed by receding vegetation with a white quartz outline welded to the dark granite, which I began to feel I could talk to at some point in Time in the future, if only I could get down to that mineral level, & of course, the idea of Death quickly intervened, although the discussion with the granite & quartz stone is something I desire in life, on a walk in winter, when no one else is around. Rays shot forth from the top of the mackerel sky like some nave in a cathedral in France I also plan to see. Meanwhile, back on Preble, the poor & homeless put up a good front after lunch, but all the bad teeth in their smiles couldn't hide the same pain I saw on my way over to the waterfront.

## A PART OF YOU LIVES ON

To live life so well, so rough-hard-edged, indelibly marked, indefinable, invisibly anonymous, private public, generous humble loving, experiential traveled leading children right into themselves, seeking secrets, knowing fast, as well as full, the abject & ecstatic, valuing Art, cherishing the rarity of friendship, rarer than Love, the sea & prairie, or ice cap & tundra, appreciating music as natural innate inspired & constructed, no dropping names, & no false notes in speech, the Truth honed close to bone, real Freedom, deep, against those closest, as well as those unseen at the top, voiced gratitude at every turn, risk taking to the max inviting loss & defeat, those grand teachers, no kowtowing to power, avoiding the rich, if need be, so that then when death comes a part of you lives on, because to live life so well, hard-edged, subtle, discreet, intuitive, indelibly marked, indefinable, invisible, anonymous, private public, generous humble loving, experiential traveled leading children right into themselves, seeking secrets, knowing fast, as well as full, the abject & ecstatic, valuing Art, cherishing the rarity of friendship, rarer than Love, the sea & prairie, or ice cap & tundra, appreciating music as natural innate inspired & constructed, no dropping names, & no false notes in speech, the Truth honed close to bone, real Freedom, deep, against those closest, as well as those unseen at the top, voiced gratitude at every turn, risk taking to the max inviting loss & defeat, those grand teachers, no kowtowing to power, avoiding the rich, if need be, so that when death finally comes, whether suddenly, or after the long ago, a part of you lives on in recollections of others, in things crafted or collected, in long-lost photos, in histories & myths, in the unrecorded & recorded records, will, letters, diaries, notebooks, love letters, write those love letters now so both of you live on, when death comes, whether suddenly, or after the long agon a part of you lives on.